

Message Text

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47

ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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NSCE-00 USIE-00 SCA-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IGA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4131

USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL NAHA

USUN NEW YORK 1709

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 27372

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TAGS: SREF, PFOR, UNHCR, TH

SUBJ: INDOCHINESE RFUGEES - BOAT CASES

REF: (A) STATE 270076 (B) STATE 242058 (C) GENEVA 7667

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SUMMARY: WITH THE THAI BECOMING HARD-NOSED TOWARD BOAT CASES,

ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL CENTER HERE IS INCONCEIVABLE UNLESS UNHCR COULD GUARANTEE THAT IT WOULD FIND AN ONWARD DESTINATION FOR EVERY REFUGEE IN IT, WHICH IS UNLIKELY. WE SEE PROCESSING FOR CONDITIONAL ENTRY OF AT LEAST SOME BOAT REFUGEES AS THE ONLY REAL POSSIBILITY FOR ACTION, REQUIRING VISITS BY AN INS OFFICER. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT CONTINUING USG FUNDING OF THE UNHCR PROGRAM IN THAILAND AND OUR TAKING SOME REFUGEES WHO ARRIVE ON BOATS, IS REQUIRED IF THAILAND IS GOING TO MAINTAIN A RELATIVELY OPEN DOOR ATTITUDE TOWARD REFUGEES.
END SUMMARY.

1. BANGKOK OBSERVERS ARE IN GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THAI ATTITUDE TOWARD REFUGEES IN GENERAL AND BOAT CASES IN PARTICULAR IS HARDENING. RTG DOES APPEAR TO BE OPERATING ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT IT WILL ATTEMPT FOR ONE YEAR TO PERSUADE REFUGEES TO RETURN HOME, AFTER WHICH IT WILL COMMENCE RESETTLEMENT (AS NOTED REF A), THUS POSTPONING FOR THE TIME BEING HAVING TO MAKE HARD DECISIONS ON RESETTLEMENT, WHICH MAY BE INEVITABLE BUT STILL FACES CONSIDERABLE DOMESTIC OPPOSITION. BOAT CASES, HOWEVER, ARE ONLY TOLERATED, AT BEST, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH PERSONS PRESENTLY ON BOATS--ALMOST ALL OF WHOM ARE DISLIKED AND DISTRUSTED BECAUSE THEY ARE VIETNAMESE--WOULD BE INCLUDED IN ANY PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT IS CONJECTURAL AT THIS POINT.

2. THOSE REFUGEES WHOSE STATUS IS MOST IN DOUBT, HOWEVER, ARE THE PEOPLE ON BOATS YET TO ARRIVE. ALTHOUGH THE RTG STATED THAT NO ONE WOULD BE PERMITTED TO LAND AFTER SEPTEMBER 1, IT CONTINUES TO PERMIT AT LEAST THOSE BOATS OF WHICH WE HEAR TO ANCHOR. THIS COULD STOP AT ANY TIME, OF COURSE. WE CANNOT CONCEIVE OF THE RTG PERMITTING A REGIONAL CENTER (WITHIN WHICH WE AND OTHERS WOULD PROCESS REFUGEES) TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THAILAND, HOWEVER, UNLESS THE UNHCR COULD GUARANTEE BEFOREHAND THAT IT WOULD TAKE OUT EVERY REFUGEE WHO ENTERED. AS THINGS NOW STAND, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE UNHCR TO MAKE SUCH A COMMITMENT, AND THE RTG SIMPLY DOES NOT WISH TO BE BURDENED WITH MORE REFUGEES--PARTICULARLY VIETNAMESE--THAN IT NOW HAS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE THAI WOULD PROBABLY POSE NO OBJECTION TO PRESENT AND FUTURE ARRIVALS ON BOATS TO BE TRANSFERRED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY OUT
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OF THE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER LOCATION.

3. REALISTICALLY, WE SUSPECT THERE ARE NO PROSPECTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL CENTER, AT LEAST IN ASIA. IN THAT CASE, IT APPEARS TO THIS EMBASSY THAT WE NEED TO DO WHATEVER POSSIBLE TO KEEP THE THAI ATTITUDE WHERE IT STANDS NOW. THIS MEANS THAT WE MUST CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUNDING OF UNHCR OPERATIONS HERE FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. IT ALSO MEANS

THAT WE MUST TAKE OUR SHARE OF PERSONS ARRIVING ON BOATS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO SHOW THE THAI MOVEMENT IN THIS AREA IF THAILAND IS NOT GOING TO SHUT ITS DOORS COMPLETELY. UNHCR'S STATEMENT THAT THE US HAS TAKEN FEW RECENT ARRIVALS ON BOATS (REF C) IS CORRECT. SINCE JUNE 30, WE HAVE ACCEPTED ONLY FIFTEEN REFUGEES OFF BOATS. (HOWEVER, OTHERS HAVE INFORMED US OF HAVING BEEN ADVISED BY RELATIVES IN THE US THAT THEY HAVE BEEN GRANTED A NUMBERS, BUT EMBASSY REFUGEE OFFICE HAS RECEIVED NO WORD ON THESE CASES. THIS IS SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE CABLE.)

4. EMBASSY CONCURS WITH DEPARTMENT STATEMENT REF A THAT CONDITIONAL ENTRY (CE) APPEARS TO OFFER BEST LONG TERM MEANS TO PERMIT US TO SUPPORT UNHCR OBJECTIVES. THIS SHOULD BE UTILIZED HERE PRIMARILY FOR BOAT CASE REFUGEES, SINCE THEY ARE GREATEST IRRITANT TO RTG. IF A POINT OUTSIDE THAILAND COULD NOT BE ESTABLISHED FOR CE PROCESSING, WE WOULD HOPE THAT INS OFFICER COULD MAKE FREQUENT VISITS HERE TO COMPLETE IT. IF A SPECIAL "AREA" FOR OUR OWN, UNILATERAL PROCESSING WERE TO BE ESTABLISHED WITHIN THAILAND, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE VIRTUALLY CERTAIN IN ADVANCE THAT THOSE IN IT WOULD BE GOING TO THE US. AS DEPARTMENT NOTED CORRECTLY, THERE WOULD BE PRESSURES FROM NON-BOAT REFUGEES TO BE INCLUDED IN CE, WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE WITHSTOOD. BETWEEN 500 AND 1,000 EW REFUGEES ENTER THAILAND EACH MONTH, OF WHOM 100-200 PROBABLY QUALIFY UNDER OLD EPP CRITERIA. THERE MAY BE OBVIOUS CASES AMONG THEM WHERE DEPARTMENT WOULD WISH TO CONSIDER CE HANDLING, AS WELL.

5. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ALL PERSONS ARRIVING ON BOATS ARE NOT NECESSARILY REFUGEES AS INCLUDED IN UNHCR'S MANDATE. AS UNDERSTOOD HERE, THERE IS A REQUIREMENT THAT THE REFUGEE MUST BE FLEEING FROM PERSECUTION OR FEAR IT. CONFIDENTIAL

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A NUMBER OF THE VIETNAMESE BOAT CASES, PERHAPS AS HIGH AS 30 PERCENT, STATE THAT THEY LEFT VIET-NAM FOR ECONOMIC REASONS OR BECAUSE THEY DO NOT LIKE COMMUNISM. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE AMONG ETHNIC CHINESE REFUGEES AND PROFESSIONAL VIETNAMESE FISHERMEN. OTHER REFUGEES, AND THIS IS APPLICABLE PRIMARILY TO CAT 1 CASES, CLEARLY STATE THAT THEY FLED IN ORDER TO JOIN RELATIVES IN THE US AND DO NOT WISH TO APPLY TO ANY OTHER COUNTRY. THUS FAR, UNHCR HAS BEEN QUITE LIBERAL IN INTERPRETING ITS RULES SO AS TO ASSIST ALL BOAT CASES; WE HOPE THIS WILL CONTINUE. IN ANY CASE, THE PEOPLE ARE HERE ON THEIR BOATS AND WILL HAVE TO BE HANDLED, WHATEVER THEIR REASONS FOR LEAVING HOME. BURKE

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